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October 31, 2005

Mr. Mike Barton, Director
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
3132 Channel Drive
Juneau, Alaska 99801-7898

RE: State Transportation Improvement Program

Mike

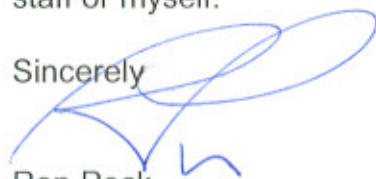
Dear Mr. Barton:

The Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) is pleased to submit recommendations for the current and upcoming State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) process.

ATIA represents over 1,000 businesses that provide visitors with tourism related services and activities. Transportation improvements are in the forefront of our membership needs because infrastructure is vital to the continued success and growth of one of Alaska's major economic sectors. As one of the few private sector growth portions of our economy, it is imperative that infrastructure enhancements continue so as not to inhibit the economic vitality of tourism throughout the regions of the state.

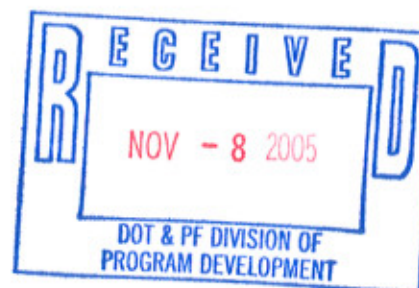
Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mark Miller of the ATIA staff or myself.

Sincerely



Ron Peck
President and COO

Cc: Transportation Committee Chair – Don Habeger
ATIA Tourism Planner – Mark Miller



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DOT & PF Commissioner

**Recommendations By Alaska Travel Industry Association
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2004
For The Period 2005-2007**

October 6, 2005

The Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) considers the State Transportation Improvement Program to be a significant funding document that economically impacts tourism and travel. Small and large tourism related businesses are all dependant on transportation infrastructure in Alaska. Without a consistent, consolidated plan for Alaska's transportation systems, the future of state tourism will be in jeopardy.

The following recommendations are made for inclusion in the 2005 version of the STIP covering construction and planning years 2007 to 2009. General recommendations for future Department of Transportation and Public Facilities development follow. Specific non-prioritized roadway and facility projects recommended by ATIA members are also listed for your consideration.

General Roadway & Facilities Recommendations

ATIA's general position regarding road and transportation improvements is that Alaska's lands should be more accessible via planned access routes that are identified through a process that considers environmental issues, local community concerns and regulatory reform. In addition, ATIA supports streamlining and consolidating the permitting process wherever possible.

Following are ATIA prescribed general guidelines for supporting specific projects as developed with ATIA member input:

ATIA supports major road improvements, including widening, shoulder development turnouts, passing lanes and pavement upgrades to highways statewide. ATIA suggests that all improvement work that is done to highways take into consideration the potential inconvenience to the traveling public during the peak travel season.

ATIA supports infrastructure and transportation development, improvements and maintenance for both year-round and seasonal roads.

ATIA supports a higher maintenance status for Alaska's rest stops. Where feasible, the ATIA also supports partnering with communities, state and federal agencies and private industry to develop new strategies for maintaining rest stops and roadside facilities.

ATIA suggests that the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities develop a comprehensive list of potential roadside rests throughout Alaska that can be established and link them to a funded plan and timeline for development in line with the Alaska Land Manager's Forum recommendations of January 1998.

Provide signage at all roadside rest areas throughout Alaska indicating that there is no overnight camping allowed. In addition, provide directions to the closest commercial facilities that provide safe, clean, attractive and secure overnight accommodations. Assure compliance by adequately funding law enforcement oversight.

Develop a comprehensive funding mechanism to allow 2-year schedule planning for the Alaska Marine Highway System.

Improve the Alaska Marine Highway system through continued implementation of recommendations made in the 2002 Mc Dowell study Marine Highway Transportation Improvement Study - Part 1 as funded through the Southeast Alaska Conference.

Projects Statewide

Following is a list of statewide recommendations that ATIA and its membership consider important to the industry and vital to the health of tourism in Alaska:

1. Install roadway pullouts to accommodate slower traffic along Parks Highway between Wasilla, Denali National Park and Fairbanks
2. Establish a routine maintenance and improvement program with funded projects for the Denali Highway and install pavement or chip seal to prevent need for grading
3. Complete East Road in Homer including roadside rests, pullouts and roadside pullouts to accommodate recreational parking
4. Implement roadway improvements and upgrade to Richardson Highway between Mileposts 115 to 128
5. Glennallen Bike Path construction (per approved STIP plan) completed as soon as possible since original funded schedule now past
6. Taylor Highway area paving from current pavement end near Chicken east to Jack Wade Junction where the Taylor Highway and Boundary Spur Road meet (32 miles), then the entire remaining length of Boundary Spur Road to the Canadian Border (approximately 13 miles)
7. Development of bike path facilities in Haines area in conjunction with highway upgrades

8. Dyea Road upgrades in Skagway, including widening, turnouts and shoulder widening improvements
9. Construct a Ft. Seward roadside information stop, parking area and roadside rest facility in the Haines area
10. Extend Baranof Road from Sitka across the entire width of Baranof Island
11. Kennicott-McCarthy Road improvements and reconstruction funding completed to augment federal allocation.
12. Complete funding for Knik Arm Crossing environmental documentation, final design and construction funding to augment federal allocation.
13. Full funding for Alaska's National Scenic Byways programs (Seward, Glenn and Richardson Highways and Alaska Marine Highway System) and expansion of this system to Taylor, Dalton, Elliot and Steese Highways
- 14 Complete funding to design and build Gravina Island Bridge, Ketchikan to augment federal allocation.
15. Design and build the Aleknagik-Wood River Bridge as a gateway to Wood-Tikchik State Park
16. Re-build the Iliamna-Nondalton road and design and build new bridge out of the Iliamna airport
17. Complete funding to design and build Chignik roadway inter-ties connecting roads to the three Chignik villages to augment federal allocation.
18. Complete funding to design and build roadway and bridge facilities connecting Williamsport-Pile Bay Road and Lake Iliamna to Cook Inlet to augment federal allocation.
19. Complete funding to build Naknek access road and bridge out of King Salmon to augment federal allocation.

20. Complete funding to build replacement Unalaska and Kodiak ferry terminals to augment federal allocation.

21. Build replacement Port Lions ferry dock

This concludes the 2004 STIP recommendations by ATIA. See Attachments for project detail.

Appendix A

**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
1. Parks Highway Paving and Turn Lanes**

Project Description and Overview:

Improve the entire length of the George Parks Highway in those sections needing roadway widening, repaving and resurfacing to allow maintenance of roadway posted speeds. Additionally, build passing lanes at intervals along the entire length to facilitate improved safety and free flow in traffic. Approximately 320 miles.

Project Recommended By:

Scott Reisland (Denali Grizzly Bear Cabins and Campground), Mat-Su & Fairbanks CVBs, Mat-Su Borough. The Board has supported this project in previous STIP submissions.

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

The George Parks highway has received a number of projects like those recommended over the past decade, but much remains to be done, especially in the more rural areas. Allowing the traveling public to travel safely and unencumbered on this highway will increase interest in making the drive, allow for potential expansion of current and additional tourism related services and provide greater access to more of the traveling public.

Cost Estimates:

Not known

1. Project Location – Parks Highway Passing & Turn Lanes Add Passing Lanes At Intervals Along Highway-Wasilla To Fairbanks



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
2. Denali Highway Road Improvements**

Project Description and Overview:

Install pavement and chip seal & establish routine maintenance of roadway from Cantwell to Paxson. Approximately 130 miles.

Project Recommended By:

Alan LeMaster (Gakona Junction Village), (Rikas Roadhouse & Landing), Mat-Su CVB, Kathie White (Backwoods Lodge). The Board has supported this project in previous STIP submissions.

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

The Denali Highway offers vistas and access to some wildlife viewing, such as caribou and bear, and rivals Denali National Park for grandeur. Improvements to this roadway may encourage additional safe access for visitor enjoyment, enjoyment that is nullified now by a minimally maintained road with potholes and drainage ruts and washouts. Improvements would make this a new, popular tourist visitor area.

Cost Estimates:

Not known

2. Project Location – Denali Highway

Install Pavement and Chip Seal & Establish Routine Maintenance



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
3. East Road In Homer**

Project Description and Overview:

Improve access to scenic views and facilitate traffic flow in a safe manner, establish roadside rests and passing lanes at intervals along the entire roadway length. Approximately 10 miles.

Project Recommended By:

Leah Jenkin (Sea Flight Sports Fishing Charters)

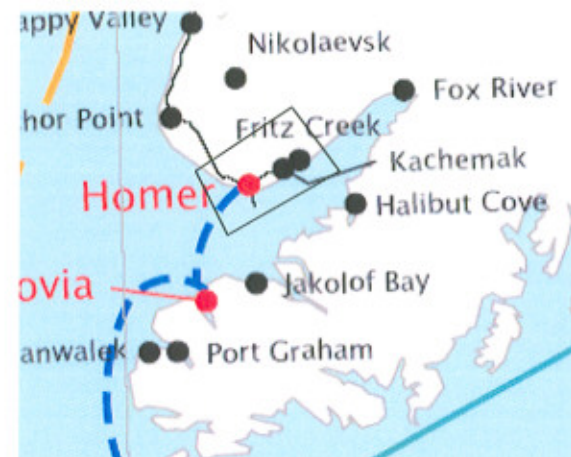
Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

East Road received some paving and widening in 2003 but no additional passing lanes or additional roadside pullouts were provided. Including these will improve access and enhance the scenic views available along this roadway system.

Cost Estimates:

Not known

3. Project Location – East Road In Homer Establish Roadside Rests, Passing Lanes and Pullouts



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
4. Richardson Highway Improvements**

Project Description and Overview:

Repave, widen and generally improve the road between Glennallen and Gakona portion of the Richardson Highway. Approximately 13 miles.

Project Recommended By:

Alan LeMaster (Gakona Junction Village). The Board has supported this project in previous STIP submissions.

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

Improved and widened roadway surfaces promote safety and improved roadway speeds, which will allow more traffic to flow through this area. This will improve accessibility and comfort for this busy and much used section of the Richardson Highway.

Cost Estimates:

Not known

4. Project Location – Richardson Highway Upgrades Improve Roadbed and Widen



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
5. Glennallen Bikepath Construction**

Project Description and Overview:

Complete bikepath project scheduled for completion in 2002, allocating any additional funds to cover inflation increases to original project costs. Approximately 3 miles of biketrail.

Project Recommended By:

Alan LeMaster (Gakona Junction Village). The Board has supported this project in previous STIP submissions.

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

A completed bikepath system in and around Glennallen as originally designed will provide another avenue to access tourism sites and business, and allow biking tourists an additional means of mobility and use.

Cost Estimates:

Not known

5. Project Location – Glennallen Bikepath Construction Complete STIP Funded Projects



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
6. Taylor Highway Improvements**

Project Overview and Description:

Paving, widening and safety improvements on the Taylor Highway from current pavement end near Chicken east to Jack Wade Junction where the Taylor Highway and Boundary Spur Road meet (32 miles), then the entire remaining length of Boundary Spur Road to the Canadian Border (approximately 13 miles)

Project Recommended By:

Gary Odle (Alaska Highway Cruises), Alan Le Master (Gakona Junction Village)
The Board has supported this project in previous STIP submissions.

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

Enhancements to the roadway will improve safety along the highway. It would also encourage larger motor home and motor coaches to travel along all or part of the Taylor Highway reducing tire, windshield and other vehicle damage. This section of roadway offers many beautiful wilderness vistas of mountains and waterway views, access to wildlife viewing of moose and caribou and seclusion in a rustic setting.

Cost Estimates:

Not Known

6. Project Location – Taylor Highway Taylor Highway & Boundary Spur Road Chicken to Canadian Border



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
7. Haines Bikepath System**

Project Description and Overview:

Design and construct a bikepath system in the community of Haines, providing planning, construction and maintenance costs for the project. Approximately 5 miles of bike trails.

Project Recommended By:

Haines CVB. The Board has supported this project in previous STIP submissions.

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

A completed bikepath system in and around Haines will provide another avenue to access tourism sites and business

Cost Estimates:

Not known

7. Project Location – Haines Bikeway Development Complete Haines Bikeway System



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
8. Skagway's Dyea Road Upgrades**

Project Description and Overview:

Improve roadway section through Dyea and Skagway by widening roadway, repaving and providing turnouts or turn lanes and including bike paths or lanes. Will allow for improved access by autos, hikers and cyclists. Approximately 2 miles

Project Recommended By:

Kathy Hosford (Chilkoot Trail Outpost)

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

This section of roadway leads to the Chilkoot Trail part of Klondike National Park and would provide safer and more timely access to this tourism attraction and connection to the main National Park exhibits in Skagway.

Cost Estimates:

Not known

8. Project Location – Skagway's Dyea Road Upgrades Roadway Widening, Add Shoulders and Provide Turn-Outs



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
9. Ft Seward Roadside Information Stop - Haines**

Project Description and Overview:

Construct paved parking lot with informational kiosk or full building to provide visitor information and informational services to the traveling public

Project Recommended By:

Haines CVB

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

A centralized place of information, convenient to major attractions in town, would allow the traveling public to get the most out of what is available in the local area.

Cost Estimates:

Not known

9. Project Location – Ft. Seward Roadside Information Stop - Haines

Construct Parking Area, Information Center & Roadside Rest Facilities



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
10. Baranof Island Road Development – Sitka To Chatham Strait**

Project Description and Overview:

Construct 60 miles of new road to the eastern side of Baranof Island to facilitate the future development of a new ferry access point.

Project Recommended By:

Sitka CVB

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

A new road would open up a large tract of pristine wilderness and allow easier and timelier access between Sitka and other ports of call within Southeast Alaska. It would also afford additional accessibility for tourist activities across the island.

Cost Estimates:

Not known

10. Project Location – Sitka - Baranof Island Road Development Extend Baranof Road To East Side Of Island



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005**

11. Kennicott-McCarthy Roadway Improvements By Wrangell-St. Elias National Park

Project Description and Overview:

Widen and pave road from the beginning of unpaved section near Chitna to the village of McCarthy, including a bridge connection to accommodate motor vehicles to the end of the road at Kennicott Mine. Roadway length approximately 65 miles total.

Project Recommended By:

AVA sponsored project request carried forward. The ATIA Board has also supported this project in previous STIP submissions.

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

An improved road would open up a large tract of pristine wilderness and allow easier and timelier access between the Kennicott-McCarthy area and the paved roadway system that starts near Chitna would have dramatic and substantial impact for allowing improved accessibility by tourists to one of the better known National Parks in Alaska. Additionally, it would improve the ability to market Wrangell St. Elias National Park as a viable alternative to Denali National Park.

Cost Estimates:

Not known

11. Project Location – Wrangell St. Elias National Park - Kennicott-McCarthy Roadway Improvements Reconstruct, Widen and Overlay Roadway



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
12. Knik Arm Crossing**

Project Description and Overview:

Build bridge and all access roads from Anchorage to Mat-Su Valley and roadway extensions to the George Parks Highway. Bridge is 2 miles long and roadway connectors would be 40 miles in total.

Project Recommended By:

Anchorage and Mat-Su CVBs. The Board has supported this project in previous STIP submissions.

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

The Knik Arm bridge would open the entire Mat Su Valley to improved access to Anchorage, improve transit of visitors and other traveling public between the Interior and other tourist destinations in Anchorage, Girdwood, Whittier, Portage and on the Kenai Peninsula. This bridge and access roads would also eliminate major roadway safety problems and congestion associated with the current roadway systems

Cost Estimates:

Not known

12. Project Location – Knik Arm Crossing Construct Bridge & New Roadway Connections



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
13. Alaska Scenic Byways**

Project Description and Overview:

Full funding to market all of Alaska's Scenic Byways

Project Recommended By:

ATIA

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

Provide a national and international audience with information about the intrinsic values of Alaska's Scenic Byways. Funding would allow improved marketing, branding and ultimately better recognition of Alaska's Scenic Byways system.

Cost Estimates:

\$500,000 over 3 years

13. Project Location – Alaska's National Scenic Byway Roadways Full Funding For Byways Marketing Activities

Seward Highway



Glenn Highway



Richardson Highway

AMHS



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
14. Gravina Island Bridge, Ketchikan**

Project Description and Overview:

Build a connector bridge between the core downtown Ketchikan area and the Ketchikan Airport on Gravina Island

Project Recommended By:

Ketchikan CVB

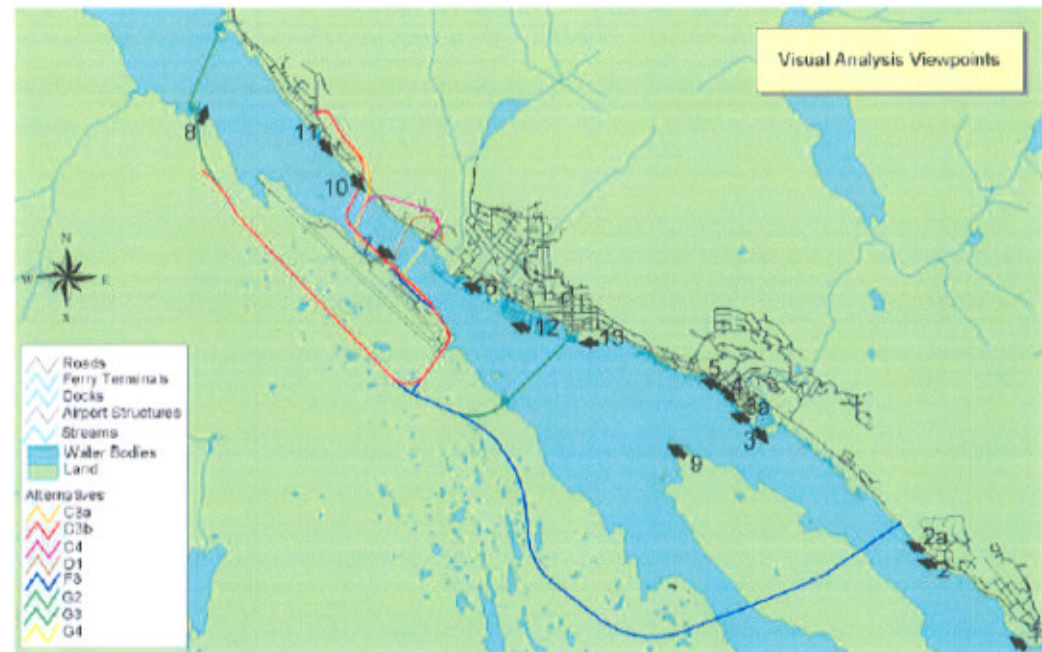
Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

A roadway connection will eliminate the ferry between downtown Ketchikan and the Ketchikan Airport. This airport is the main air link between serving the southern region of Southeast Alaska; the bridge will make accessibility substantially easier for visitors coming to the area. Additionally, this road connection will allow for improved access to recreational and tourist opportunities on Gravina Island.

Cost Estimates:

\$180 million

14. Project Location – Gravina Island Bridge - Ketchikan Construct Bridge From Ketchikan To Gravina Island Airport



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
15. Bridge Between Aleknagik & Wood-Tikchik**

Project Description and Overview:

Construct a new bridge to connect Aleknagik & Wood-Tikchik State Park.

Project Recommended By:

Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

Aleknagik is the gateway to one of Alaska's premier state parks in the Wood-Tikchik State Park and building a bridge connecting the road from Dillingham to Aleknagik would allow expansion of the outdoor recreational opportunities associated with the state park lands.

Cost Estimates:

Not known

15. Project Location – Aleknagik-Wood River Bridge Construct Bridge Between Aleknagik & Wood-Tikchik State Park



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
16. Iliamna-Nondalton Road Rehabilitation**

Project Description and Overview:

Improve existing roadway between the communities of Iliamna and Nondalton including a new bridge over the Newhalen River. Roadway length is less than 10 miles.

Project Recommended By:

Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference

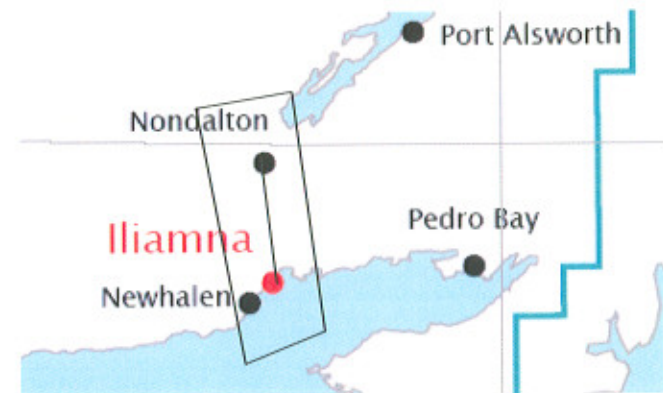
Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

Improve No Dalton resident's access to Iliamna's regional airport and lower costs for goods and services. It improves safety for year round access making this destination more amenable to tourist attraction.

Cost Estimates:

\$8,300,000

16. Project Location – Re-Build Iliamna-Nondalton Road New Bridge From Airport & Road Reconstruction



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
17. Chignik Roadway Interties**

Project Description and Overview:

Build roads between Chignik, Chignik Lagoon and Chignik Lake. Currently there are no roads. Total roadway length less than 30 miles.

Project Recommended By:

Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference

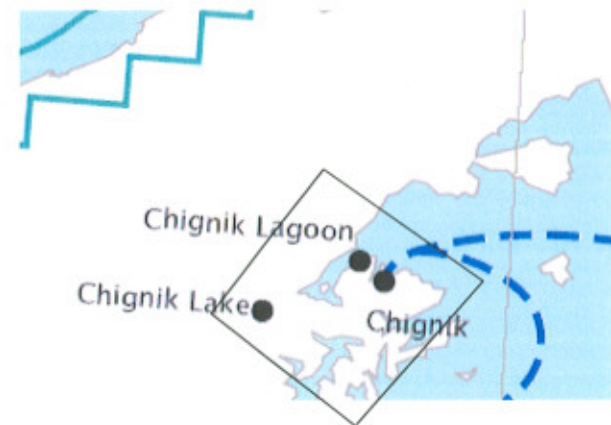
Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

Connecting these 3 villages would allow greater access between two saltwater ports and a pristine mountain lake, all within the shadow of an active volcano. The opportunities to get up close to an active volcano and enjoy the intrinsic values of the Alaska Peninsula related to fishing and wilderness experience would be an excellent addition to the visitor experiences now found in other Peninsula areas like the Katmai Area. This is also on the Alaska Marine Highway Scenic Byways route and would be an excellent enhancement to the intrinsic values provided on the route.

Cost Estimates:

\$28,146,000

17. Project Location – Chignik Roadway Interties Connect 3 Communities By Road



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
18. Lake Iliamna to Cook Inlet Connection**

Project Description and Overview:

Widen narrow sections of roadway and upgrade several bridges on the Williamsport – Pile Bay Road. This would facilitate completion of the Cook Inlet to Bristol Bay corridor as well as tie in the Lake Iliamna communities with re-supply support and railbelt markets.

Project Recommended By:

Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

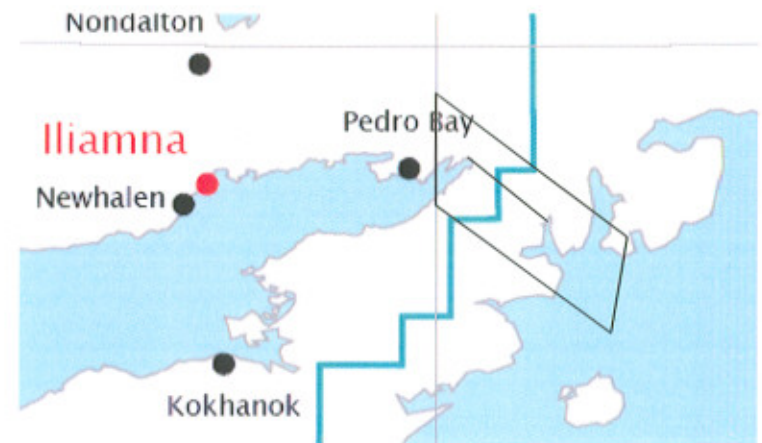
The current road between Lake Iliamna at Pile Bay and Williamsport stops short of Cook Inlet and is serviceable but poor condition. Completion of the road segment between Williamsport and Cook Inlet at Iliamna Bay would allow direct access to Lake Iliamna just a short distance across Cook Inlet from Homer, opening up this area to more tourism development serviceable by car and motor coach. Such improved access, in conjunction with a ferry system to Homer, could potentially open this area to new tourism entrepreneurial opportunities, expand the ready access to pristine wilderness experiences to the motoring public and allow, for the first time, affordable access to this area.

Cost Estimates:

Not Known

18. Project Location – Lake Iliamna To Cook Inlet

Connect Williamsport Pile Bay Road and Lake Iliamna to Cook Inlet



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
19. Naknek Roadway Connections**

Project Description and Overview:

Connect road leading from King Salmon to Naknek by bridge, completing related roadway improvements to connect the two villages directly. Road length less than 20 miles.

Project Recommended By:

Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

Improvements and a bridge connection will make the two communities of King Salmon and Naknek will improve infrastructure and give tourists and visitors more variety and options, connect the airport access to both villages and serve to facilitate the movement of goods and other resources between the two villages lowering development costs and time for completion of existing or future tourism businesses, such as lodges.

Cost Estimates:

Not known

19. Project Location – Naknek South Naknek to North Naknek Connection



**ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
20. Unalaska & Kodiak Ferry Terminals**

Project Description and Overview:

Build replacement ferry terminals in each location allowing easier access to the Alaska Marine Highway System vessels, enhance the safety and accommodations in the waiting areas, improve docking space and enlarge vehicle holding areas.

Project Recommended By:

Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference

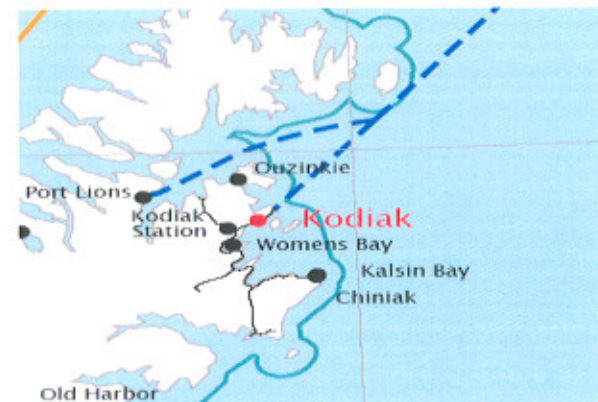
Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

Improvements as mentioned will allow the capacity of the ferry system passenger load to increase with increased awareness of easier access to vessels servicing these ports. Larger and more user-friendly ferry terminal buildings will make the waiting experience less of a hardship while improving the serviceability of each terminal with less on going maintenance expenses for facility maintenance.

Cost Estimates:

Not known

20. Project Location – Unalaska & Kodiak Ferry Terminals Docks and Terminals



ATIA Recommended Project
To The
State Transportation Improvement Program 2006-2008
October 6, 2005
21. Pt. Lions Ferry Dock

Project Description and Overview:

Reconstruct and improve ferry dock at Pt. Lions

Project Recommended By:

Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference

Potential Benefit To Tourism Industry:

Improved ferry dock facilities will allow a larger vessels to dock and provide for more timely and safer operations to move people and goods to and from the ferry vessel.

Cost Estimates:

Unknown

21. Project Location – Pt Lions Ferry Dock Improvements Reconstruct Current facility To Accommodate Larger Vessels

